



WISEWOMAN

Success Story 8 Voucher Is Key to Helping Iowa Women Quit Smoking

Location Iowa

Focus Empower women to quit smoking by connecting them to smoking cessation programs and giving them a way to pay for these services.

Strategy The Iowa WISEWOMAN partnered with the state's Tobacco Control Program to identify smoking cessation services statewide. Staff started a referral program that connects women who smoke to smoking cessation programs near their homes and designed a Stop Smoking Voucher to give women a simple way to cover the costs of services.

Early Successes WISEWOMAN participants may use the \$80 vouchers to join a contracted program at any time during the year following their enrollment. The vouchers give WISEWOMAN coordinators a way to start talking about smoking cessation without putting women on the defensive.

The Iowa WISEWOMAN program has provided Stop Smoking Vouchers to 410 women. By the end of June 2004, 38 women had cashed in their vouchers.

Women have access to a variety of resources through the vouchers, including quit lines, one-on-one counseling, and organized classes. These programs give them the support they need to learn the coping skills that will help them quit smoking successfully. By identifying existing smoking cessation programs, the WISEWOMAN program was able to support women in their efforts to quit smoking without duplicating services.

For More Information Sandra J. Ryan, MS, RD, LD
WISEWOMAN Project Coordinator
Iowa Department of Public Health
Lucas State Office Bldg., 4th Floor
321 E. 12th Street
Des Moines, IA 50319-0075
Phone: 515-281-4909
E-mail: sryan@idph.state.ia.us

Voucher Is Key to Helping Iowa Women Quit Smoking

The Iowa WISEWOMAN program struggled to decide who would provide smoking cessation services in each of the 15 program sites. “We felt we could make the biggest impact on women’s heart health by focusing on nutrition and physical activity. But because smoking is one of the major causes of heart disease, we wanted women who smoked to have the best chance to quit,” says Program Coordinator Sandra J. Ryan, MS, RD, LD. The planning team decided not to include smoking cessation services in its nutrition and physical activity intervention, but to refer participants to existing services in or near WISEWOMAN program counties.

After much discussion and investigation, the Iowa WISEWOMAN program started a referral service by contracting with existing smoking cessation providers. When a woman who smokes enrolls in the Iowa WISEWOMAN program, staff members refer her to a contracted local smoking cessation program. Program costs are covered by WISEWOMAN through the Stop Smoking Voucher.

Before participants could be referred for services, the WISEWOMAN staff needed to know what resources were available. They partnered with the state’s Tobacco Control Program and local agencies, such as county extension offices, hospitals, and public health agencies, to develop a list of smoking cessation programs near each local WISEWOMAN program site. They found that communities provide a wide variety of services: quit lines, one-on-one counseling, nicotine replacement therapy, and organized classes are just some examples.

“We found that each local program was designed to be effective for that specific community,” Sandra says. “The agency offering a program—often not a medical agency—knew what worked best and what did not work. By partnering with these providers, we were giving women access to the most effective services in their communities.”

WISEWOMAN staff designed the Stop Smoking Voucher as a discreet, simple way to cover the costs. All WISEWOMAN participants who smoke receive an \$80 voucher. They may choose to use it to join a contracted program at any time during the year following enrollment. Providers in all 15 sites agreed to provide their usual services (classes or one-on-one counseling) for the \$80 payment. When a voucher is presented, the provider adds the correct name and address and mails it to the WISEWOMAN billing contractor for reimbursement.

The voucher is a bifold brochure that fits easily into a woman’s purse. It explains how a woman’s body will change over time after she stops smoking. By listing the health benefits

she will reap 1 month, 1 year, 5 and even 10 years later, the WISEWOMAN program hopes to encourage each participant to quit. The participant’s WISEWOMAN enrollment date and a proposed counseling session date and time are written on the voucher.

Black Hawk County WISEWOMAN Coordinator Gabbi DeWitt says the voucher gives her a way to open the door to talk about smoking. “I’m not telling them they have to quit smoking, just that I have a voucher that gives them an option to quit smoking in the next year. That way, I take myself out of the ‘preaching’ group that might include their family, friends, and doctor who may be harping on them to quit.”

WISEWOMAN participants who have used the voucher seem to like it. It connects them to a program where they can get support to kick the habit, materials to take home, or other services. Many of the participants who unsuccessfully tried to quit smoking on their own did not learn coping skills. The counseling sessions teach these skills.

“I’m not telling them they have to quit smoking, just that I have a voucher that gives them an option to quit smoking in the next year.”

**—Gabbi DeWitt
Black Hawk County
WISEWOMAN Coordinator**

Importance of Success

The Iowa WISEWOMAN program has provided vouchers to 410 women, or 30.6% of the total Iowa WISEWOMAN population to date. At the end of June 2004, 38 women—almost 10%—had cashed in their vouchers by attending sessions. The vouchers allow women to attend sessions near home and to receive services from experts. The referral system is flexible. If a WISEWOMAN participant does not use her voucher within a year, she is issued a new voucher when she enrolls in WISEWOMAN the next year.

Lessons Learned

- Smoking cessation methods may vary from one community to another. Learn which services are available for women who want to quit smoking and how WISEWOMAN participants can access them. Partner with existing programs when possible and avoid duplicating services.
- Many communities have smoking cessation programs that are free or subsidized by grants. Be careful not to supplant funds (pay twice) by using the voucher. A counseling program that is free to other community residents should be free to WISEWOMAN participants.
- For a woman to successfully quit smoking, she must decide for herself to change the behavior. It is important to encourage women to stop smoking and to give them the flexibility of choosing the best time to participate in a cessation program.